

# THE NATIONAL ERA.

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In transcribing names, it is probable that errors have occurred. Our friends are requested to notify us in such cases, that they may be immediately corrected.

Agents will notice that we keep an account with each subscriber. Hence no accounts will be kept with the agents; and in transmitting money on which they are entitled to a commission, they will retain the amount of their commission, and, *all else*, forward the money with the names, so as to make the account clear.

Any person who will promise, may have a fifth copy gratis for one year.

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THE NATIONAL ERA.

THE DEMOCRAT.

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF WILLIAM LEGGETT, OF NEW YORK.

"On FREDONIUS" then art, not as poets dream, Fair young girl, with light and delicate limbs, And wavy tresses gushing from the cap. With a smile, she said, "I am the wife of his slave, When he took off the green. A bearded man, Ardent to the teeth, art thou? a man who has Great power over me, when I say thy name, Glorious in beauty though he is, he is scared With thy words, and when thy eyes are cast At me, I shrink back. Power at this has lameled him, And with his lightnings smitten them. They could not quench the life thou hadest given."

Bravely he stood, and with a look that has made him famous, and with his lightnings smitten them. They could not quench the life thou hadest given."

William Leggett! Let our right hand forget his cunning, when that hand shall fail to awaken generous emotions, and aspirations for a higher and wiser manhood! True man and True Democrat; faithful always to liberty, following wherever she led, whether the storm beat in his face or in his lock; unhesitatingly countering his enemies on his own, whether in the guise of Whig monopoly and selfish expediency, or Democratic self-sacrifice, or Anti-slavery south of it; poor, yet incorrigible; dependent upon party favor, as party itself, yet risking all in condemnation of that party, when in the wrong; a man of the people, yet never stooping to flatter the people's prejudices; he is the politician, of all others, who in the absence of his colleague, was at that time sole editor of the Post, and who had everything to lose, in a worldly point of view, by assailing a leading functionary of the Government, who was a favorite of General Jackson and sharer of his popularity, did not hesitate as to the course which consistency and duty required at his hands. He took stand for unpopular truth, at a time when a different course on his part could not have failed to secure him the favor and patronage of his party. In the great struggle with the Bank of the United States, his services had not been appreciated by the President and his friends. Without directly approving the course of the Administration on the question of the rights of the Abolitionists, he remained silent in respect to it, he might have avoided all suspicion of mental and moral independence incompatible with party allegiance. The impractical honesty of Leggett, never bending from the erectness of truth for the sake of that "thrift which follows fawning," dictated a most severe and scorching review of the letter of Kendall. "More monstrous, more detestable doctrines, we have never heard promulgated!" he exclaimed, in one of his leading editorials. "With what face, after this, can Mr. Kendall punish a postmaster for any exercise of the fearfully dangerous power of stopping and destroying any portion of the mail?" The Abolitionists do not deserve to be placed on the same footing with a foreign enemy, nor their publications on the secret despots of others. No American citizen, who is not a slave, can afford to give up his freedom, and subserve the interests of others. A poor man, he admitted that he established himself in chains round the crib of Governmental patronage, putting on the spaniel and putting off the man, and making their whole lives a miserable lie, shrink back from a contrast with the proud and austere dignity of his character! What a comment on their own condition is the memory of a man who could calmly endure the loss of party favor, the reproaches of his friends, the malignant assaults of his enemies, and the fretting evils of poverty, in the hope of bequeathing, like the dying teacher of Ford,

"A fame as sound unbroken."

To美 of Time's old daughter, Truth."

The praises which such men are now constrained to bestow upon us, are their own condemnation. Every stone which they pile upon his grave, is written over with the record of their hypocrisy.

We have written rather for the living than the dead. And as one of that proscribed and hunted band of Abolitionists, whose rights were so bravely defended by William Leggett, we should, indeed, be wanting in ordinary gratitude, not to do honor to his memory; but we have been actuated at the present time mainly by a hope that the character, the lineaments of which we have so imperfectly sketched, may awaken a generous enthusiasm in the hearts of the Young Democracy of our country. Democracy such as William Leggett believed and practised, Democracy in its pure and all-inclusive significance, is destined to be the settled political faith of this republic.

Democracy, like the spirit of British customs infusing themselves into every arrangement respecting the emancipated—the one treating the freeman practically as he does a slave—scolding, berating, and oppressing in full force, in the golden time; and the other, in the lordly spirit of British aristocracy, never dreaming of making the emancipated anything more than a low English peasantry, and of course approaching and dealing with them in every way most abominable.

Leggett has been expected both before and since the emancipation of the slaves in the British West Indies, by the religious and philanthropic people of Great Britain, in sustaining missions and providing education for the black and colored population. The chief effort have been made in Jamaica. There are also a few American missionaries and teachers in that island, who are laboring to do good, in a humble and self-denying way. It is to be hoped that these missions will be successful.

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## THE NATIONAL ERA.

WASHINGTON, MARCH 4, 1847.

### THE CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION—ANTI-SLAVERY MEN.

We proceed at once to notice the following resolutions of the State Liberty Convention of Massachusetts:

*Resolved*, That, to secure human rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed—but the power and scope of such governments cannot extend to that of conflict with the natural rights of man, or be inconsistent with the principles of natural justice.

*Resolved*, That the Constitution of the United States does not establish slavery, nor give it any legal existence, nor did it, by any fair interpretation, give it any right to exist within the States. Nor could it so sanction it, even had its framers so intended, inasmuch as slavery had at that time no legal existence in any of the States of the Union: Because, first, the colonial charters did not authorize it; Secondly, the trade between the Colonies and Great Britain was prohibited by Great Britain. Thirdly, the decision of the Court of King's Bench, in the case of Somersett, in 1772, settled the law of the land, as applicable to the Colonies, as to any part of Great Britain. Fourthly, the Declaration of Independence, in 1776, became a fundamental law of the land, which was equally inconsistent with the natural rights of man, and the principles of natural justice.

The first resolution affirms, that “the power and scope” of a government founded upon the consent of the governed, “cannot extend so far as to conflict with the natural rights of man, or be inconsistent with the principles of natural justice.”

No comment upon this would be needed, were it not for the doctrine, recently broached by some

that law is no law unless it be a righteous one;

a doctrine with no other force than that derived from a mere play of words. Whether the “power and scope” of such a government as that named above, can extend so far as to conflict with the natural rights of man, is a mere question of fact.

The right to violate “the natural rights of man, or act inconsistently with the principles of natural justice,” certainly exists nowhere. But that “the power and scope” (the last term meaning design or purpose) of such a government may extend so far as to conflict with natural rights, is proved by the fact, that some fifteen Governments in this country are continually sanctioning and enforcing the violation of such rights.

“Ah! but they are not just Governments,” it is said. True. Is it meant by the proposition, that no *just* government can, in its provisions, “conflict with natural rights and the principles of natural justice?” This is a truism—a just government certainly cannot at the same time be an unjust one.

But it is the second resolution which deserves special comment.

It is often remarked, that it is unwise to make any concession to Slavery. So it is. And not only unwise, but indefensible. But it is always proper to make concessions demanded by the Truth. An unsound argument or an erroneous statement, put forth against slavery, tends to strengthen its claims.

We agree with the declaration, that the Constitution of the United States does not establish slavery, or give it any legal existence.

We go further, and affirm, that it conveys no power upon the Government to establish slavery, or give it legal existence.

Nor does it give *any legal sanction* to the system. But by no means do we assert to the position that “it could not have given such a sanction, even had its framers so intended;” nor do we admit the truth generally of the allegations made in support of this position.

As to the Colonial Charters, we shall say nothing about them, for we have no opportunity now to examine them. But, so far as we remember, they did not prohibit the establishment of slavery, and were not repugnant to it.

On what ground the second statement is made, we are at a loss to understand. The trade in slaves between the Colonies and Africa was recognised as a *legal commerce*—was sanctioned by the Crown—was perpetuated by the use of the royal veto, in opposition to the express will of some of the colonies. These are facts attested by history.

So far back as the year 1732, the Legislature of Virginia began to legislate against the foreign slave trade. The duties upon slave importation were increased, from time to time, till, in 1772, they amounted to above forty per cent. In the same year, a petition on the subject was presented to the Throne, from the House of Burgesses of Virginia. It says that the commerce in slaves had “long been considered as a trade of great inhumanity, and under its present encouragement, it threatened the existence of His Majesty’s colonies. After showing that though some of his ‘Majesty’s subjects of Great Britain’ might reman entum of the colonies,” it concluded as follows:

“Duly impressed with these sentiments, we most humbly beseech your Majesty to remove all these restraints on your Majesty’s Governors of this colony, which prohibits their assembling to such laws as might check so very pernicious a commerce.”

How does this plain statement of facts consist with the declaration that the trade in slaves was never legalised by Great Britain?

In the Constitution of Virginia, “the inhuman use of the royal negative,” in refusing permission to exclude slaves from the colonies, was assigned as one of the reasons for separating from Great Britain. Besides,

why it was found necessary to agitate so long and earnestly to procure a law *abolishing the slave trade* from this country, it greatly retarded the settlement of the colonies.” It concluded as follows:

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Thou wilt see that Boston has responded to the call of your great Washington meeting. The impulse is reaching the small country towns, and the press and pulpit are everywhere speaking out in behalf of our perishing brethren on the other side of the Atlantic. The steamer which leaves on the 1st of next month will carry out large sums of money.

The measures for immediate relief, proposed by Lord John Russell at the opening of the Parliament, are liberal and efficient. The policy of the Government in relation to the employment of the desultory on public works is to be abandoned, and present relief afforded to the suffering, through local committees, without exacting work in return. The laborers are thus to be left free to work on their own patches or for the farmers, and thus prepare for the next harvest. Lord Brougham estimates the expense of this relief, for the year to come, at from £100,000,000 to £150,000,000. £50,000 is to be lent to the landlords for the new crop. In his plan for the permanent relief of Ireland, the Premier has omitted the only things which can possibly save the afflicted country from a recurrence of the dreadful desolation which now shocks the world. The soil of Ireland should be made to support its poor. The estates should be held responsible for the employment of all the laborers. The plan of Lord John Russell is, in reality, one for the relief of the landlords, and not of the laborers. The latter have a right claim upon the soil—a claim stronger and more sacred than the grants of Elizabeth or the sequestrations of the Long Parliament. A change, radical and revolutionary, must be made in the tenure of landed property. Now is the time, when the terrible necessity overlooks all conventionalisms and old usages, to effect this change peacefully; for peaceably, or as in France, with the smoke of burning mansions and the blood of aristocracy, it must sooner or later be made.

Slowly comes a hungry people, like a lion creeping silent, at one who makes and winds behind a slow fire."

J. G. W.

#### FREEDOM BETRAYED.

The deed is done. Executive influence has again triumphed. Freedom is betrayed. Yesterday, at half past one o'clock, Wilmett's proviso was defeated by Northern votes. The yeas were 97, nays 102. It passed the House a few weeks since by nine majority—yeas 115, nays 106. The following members from the North changed their votes, having voted yes when the proviso was under consideration, but now voting the vote was taken yesterday. RUSSELL and WOODRUFF, of New York; EDGALL, of New Jersey; HENLEY, of Indiana; JACOB THOMPSON, of Pennsylvania.

What new light has dawned upon them during the last three weeks? Within that time we must remember, the President had some five or six hundred new offices put at his disposal. Remarkable coincidence! The truth is, with a pro-slavery Executive, with immense patronage at his disposal, it is wonderful that more changes have not taken place.

In the Senate, it will be seen that the question has been carried against Liberty, also by Northern and Western men: CASS, of Michigan; DICKINSON, of New York; BRIGHT and HANNEGAN, of Indiana, BREESE, of Illinois; Semple was absent. Mr. Lewis, of Alabama, who had been dangerously sick for weeks, was brought out to vote.

Honor to J. M. CLAYTON, of Delaware, who voted for the proviso.

But what of General Cass? The disappointment of Mr. Calhoun at the vote of General Cass, some say, was extreme. It could not have been greater than will be the disappointment that awaits the General. This vote was an act of suicide. No matter how brought about, as a Presidential candidate, he can expect no free State, except Michigan and Illinois, and in the South Mr. Calhoun has forestalled him.

We cannot forbear directing attention to the course of Preston King and his associates, Brinkerhoff, Wilmett, Wentworth, and a few other fearless Democrats, who maintained their integrity to the last—fighting for every inch of the ground they had taken, and boldly recording their votes in the negative on the final passage of the bill, when stripped of its proviso.

Next week we shall have something to say of this whole transaction.

#### CONGRESS.

#### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25.

Mr. FAIRFIELD reported a joint resolution, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, authorizing the employment of the United States ship Macedonian, to transport provisions for the suffering poor of Ireland. The resolution appropriates \$6,000 for the ship.

Mr. CUTTING asked the Senator to let the subject lie over till to-morrow, as he had not yet prepared a bill upon the same subject.

Mr. BADGER asked whether it would not be better to send a Government vessel, in first-rate order, at once to the scene of suffering, and let the Secretary of the Navy authorize it. He was out and out opposed to lending a public vessel to Mexico as the great conqueror:

Mr. COOKE offered the following proviso:

*Provided*, That nothing herein contained shall be construed into an approval of the act of the President in permitting Santa Anna to return to Mexico.

The Chair ruled the amendment out of order.

The amendments proposed by the Committee on Military Affairs to the fifth section were agreed to.

The next amendment proposed by the Committee on Military Affairs was read:

Mr. ANDREW JOHNSON moved to add the following:

*Provided*, That nothing in this act shall be so construed as to authorize the President of the United States to appoint any member of Congress.

Disagreed to—aye 42, nays 86.

The amendment of the committee was then agreed to.

The amendment of the committee to the seventh section was then read and agreed to.

All the amendments reported by the Committee on Military Affairs having been acted on—

Mr. SEVERE asked whether it would not be better to send a member of Congress to the seat of war.

Mr. COOKE offered the following proviso:

*Provided*, That the sum now or heretofore appropriated to the expenses of the war, and to the support of the army, shall be suspended until the arrival of a member of Congress.

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